

FV203-CS1

June 1999

Commodity Specification

Frozen Vegetables



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I. General**A. U.S. Standards**

Frozen Vegetables (product/commodity) produced under this Commodity Specification must meet the requirements specified in the applicable United States Standards for Grades of Frozen Vegetables (U.S. Standards) effective on the date of the Invitation for Offers to Sell (Invitation). The U.S. Standards are published separately (7 C.F. R. part 52) and are incorporated herein and made a part of this Commodity Specification.

B. Exceptions to U.S. Standards

Exceptions to the U.S. Standards for the Department of Agriculture (USDA) Frozen Vegetables purchases are found in Section II, Individual Product Specifications, of this document. Additional exceptions may be specified in the applicable Invitation. Any exceptions contained in the applicable Invitation shall have precedence over the requirements contained herein, for that Invitation only.

C. Product Origin

1. Commodities delivered pursuant to this Commodity Specification shall have originated from crops that have been 100% grown, processed, and packed in the United States, its territories or possessions, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands, (hereinafter referred to as the United States). See Section I.F. of Announcement FV-203.
2. If the contractor handles any commodity originating from sources other than the United States, the contractor must have a written plan to segregate the commodity. This segregation plan will include an identification and record system for all commodities to ensure they are completely segregated and cannot be used to fulfill contracts awarded by USDA. Such segregation plan must be made available to representatives of the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).
3. The contractor must maintain positive written documentation records evidencing 100 percent domestic origin, to the grower level. Contractors must also ensure that the documentation provided by any sub-contractors demonstrates the same level of traceability. The burden of proof of compliance is on the contractor.

Documentation may include load or warehouse storage receipts for raw product (i.e., bin tags), product blend (formulation) records, product coding explanations, finished product warehousing records, shipping or payment records, or other documentation or evidence that clearly establishes the product's domestic origin.

4. Contractors must provide the domestic origin certification and supporting documentation records to representatives of the AMS Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Processed Products Branch (USDA Grader) when requesting

inspection service. USDA graders will select and review at least one code for each contract to determine compliance with the Agency's domestic origin requirements.

5. Such records must be available for review by the Government in accordance with Article 76 of USDA-1. In the event of an audit, AMS auditors will examine as many codes as is necessary to verify compliance.
6. Self-certifications by contractors and sub-contractors will not be accepted.
7. Failure to observe this requirement may lead to suspension or debarment, contract termination, and penalties at Title 18, Section 1001 of the U.S. Code concerning falsification of information.

D. Manufacturing Practices

- 1) Good Manufacturing Practices

All Frozen Vegetables must be produced in accordance with the Food and Drug Administration's Good Manufacturing Practices (21 C.F.R., Part 110).

- 2) Plant Audit

Successful bidders are required to undergo an annual plant survey.

The primary purpose of conducting a plant survey is to ensure that the contractor produces products in a clean, sanitary environment. Contractors are required to maintain process operations records that are sufficiently detailed as to allow the Processed Products Branch (PPB) to determine past and current sanitation practices.

PPB, AMS, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, will conduct the plant surveys. PPB personnel will follow the procedures found in the most current version of PPB File Code 159-A-1, Plant Sanitation. Contractors must provide the Contracting Officer with a copy of an acceptable completed survey. An acceptable plant survey will be valid for one year.

Contractors who have a PPB inspector in-plant through a contract service agreement will be considered to have met the plant survey requirement, since a plant survey is a prerequisite to a contract service agreement.

Completion of the plant survey prior to the submission of a bid is suggested, but not required. If a firm submitting a bid receives an award, and has not had a plant survey within the past year, it must provide proof of an acceptable plant survey not later than 10 business days from the date of the contract. Failure to provide this documentation within the proper time frame will result in the contract being terminated for cause.

E. Packing Season

All Frozen Vegetables must be from the current packing season/crop year, unless otherwise specified in the applicable Invitation.

F. Grade of Frozen Vegetables

All Frozen Vegetables must be U.S. Grade A (as defined in the U. S. Standard) unless otherwise specified in Section II, Individual Product Specifications, herein or the applicable Invitation.

G. Fill of Container

1. Contractor must meet the net weight for the product as specified in the applicable U.S. Standards unless otherwise indicated herein.
 - a. Shipping cases for frozen product shall contain twelve 2 ½-pound, six 5-pound, or one 30-pound bulk container.
2. The average net weight must meet the net weight as printed on the label.

H. Packing, Labels and Packaging

1. Primary Containers
 - a. Frozen product must be packed in primary containers of food grade quality in accordance with the Food Additives Regulations of the Federal Food and Drug Administration containing five, or thirty pounds of each product.
 - b. All containers must be completely sealed (tack sealing is not acceptable);
 - c. However, 30-pound polyethylene containers closed with a tying device or folded in a commercially acceptable manner are acceptable.
 - d. Kraft paper containers without polyethylene liners are not acceptable.
 - e. All products must be packed in new, commercially acceptable primary containers. Frozen Vegetables shall be packed only in the container size and type specified in the applicable Invitation.

The primary containers must be suitably code marked so that the product can be identified with related inspection certificates.

2. Secondary Containers

1. The construction of shipping cases shall be adequate to withstand normal refrigerated shipping and cold storage and shall meet one of the following requirements:
 - a. Corrugated fiberboard construction, rated at a minimum of 275 pounds per square inch bursting strength, or
 - b. Shipping cases for product packed in paperboard containers shall be of corrugated fiberboard construction, rated at a minimum of 200 pounds per square inch bursting strength.
2. Cases must be marked in such a manner that they contain all of the symbols, statements and information contained in Exhibit 2, "Required Markings for Shipping Containers".

Cases may be marked by printing or stenciling or by preprinted (with **BLACK INK**), self-adhesive stickers. Self-adhesive stickers must be affixed to the case in such a manner that they cannot be removed intact.

Exact arrangement and adherence to font size is not required. The case markings must be clearly marked, easily read, and substantially the same as specified in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 3 shows an alternative placard that may be applied to a new, corrugated fiberboard case acceptable by common or other carriers for safe transportation to destinations. This placard must be affixed to the case in such a manner that they cannot be removed intact.

Cases must have the recycling statement shown in Exhibit 6, "Please Recycle" Symbol and Statement or Exhibit 7, "Corrugated Recycles" Symbol and Statement.
3. Shipping cases may be sealed by plastic tape in lieu of glue. The tape must be sufficient width and strength that is used commercially to be acceptable by common carriers for safe transportation to destinations. The tape must extend down the sides or ends at least two inches. A tape of the see-through type shall be used.
4. The net weight must be expressed in metric as well as avoirdupois units.
5. The containers, labels, cases, and case markings must meet the United States Standards for Condition of Food Containers (7 CFR Part 42) except that the Flap (b) section Table VI-Rigid and Semirigid Containers – Defects – Flap (b) is waived provided that the flap gap does not exceed 1 inch and the flaps are fully glued.

I. Universal Product Codes (UPC)

Primary label and shipping container Universal Product Codes for USDA products are listed in Exhibit 5. The Contractor's UPC is not acceptable. The primary container UPC must be positioned on the frozen label as shown in Exhibit 1. The shipping container UPC must be marked on the case as shown in Exhibit 2.

J. Palletization Requirements**1. Pallets**

Products must be on 40 X 48 inch, non-reversible, flush stringer, and partial four-way entry. New pallets must be good quality wood. Used pallets must be No.1 hardwood or its equivalent in new softwood. If pallet exchange is desired, the contractor shall arrange for pallet exchange with consignees. USDA is in no way responsible for arrangement of pallet exchange.

2. Unitization

Each delivery unit of Frozen Vegetables must be unitized (palletized and stretchwrapped). Shipping cases must be stacked and secured from top to bottom, so that each container and layer of containers becomes an integral part of the pallet. Either stretch wrapping with plastic film or "lock 'n pop" is acceptable.

II. Individual Commodity Specifications**A. Frozen, Whole Kernel Corn**

1. Grade: U.S. Grade B or better.
2. Color Type: Golden
3. **Variety: Frozen Supersweet Whole Kernel Corn may be used as long as it follows the guidelines in attachment No. 1, as well as this Announcement.**

B. Frozen, Peas

1. Grade: U.S. Grade B or better, with no additives except salt acquired during processing

C. Frozen, Green Beans

1. Grade: U.S. Grade B or better, except shall be U.S. Grade A for extraneous vegetable material.

- c. Type: Round
- d. Color: Green
- e. Styles: Whole, cut (sliced lengthwise, or French style), provided that cut style units must be one inch in length or longer.

NOTE: Compliance with “cut” style one inch or longer provisions will be determined using the criteria in 7 CFR Part 52.2323 of the United States Standards for Grades of Frozen Green and Wax Beans”, except to change the definition of a minor defect in Table I for “cut” style to read: “Piece shorter than $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in length.”

D. Frozen, Mixed Vegetables

- 1. Grade: U.S. Grade B or better.
- 2. Proportions of Ingredients:
 - (a) Not more than 40 percent by weight carrots (diced style $\frac{3}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch cube).
 - (b) Not more than 40 percent by weight corn (sweet, golden or yellow, whole kernel corn).
 - (c) Not more than 40 percent by weight green peas.

E. Frozen, Asparagus

- 1. Grade - U.S. Grade A.
- 2. Sizes (Diameter) of spears and tips – medium size or No. 2 classification $\frac{3}{8}$ inch to.
- 3. Length of cut – 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches, $\pm \frac{1}{4}$ inch.

F. Frozen, Carrots

- 1. Grade: U.S. Grade A
- 2. Style: Sliced/Crinkle

G. Frozen, Corn-on-the-cob

- 1. Grade: U.S. Grade A (or U.S. Fancy)
- 2. Length: Short
- 3. Color: Golden (or yellow)
- 4. Style: Trimmed
- 5. Flavor and Odor: Good flavor and odor

6. Unit Size: 1,320
7. Pack Size: 96 ears per case

H. Frozen, Mashed Sweet Potatoes

1. Grade: U.S. Grade A
2. Style: Mashed
3. Net Weight: 30 pounds (6/5 lb. bags)

I. Frozen, Random Cut Sweet Potatoes

1. Grade: U.S. Grade A.
2. Style: Cut
3. Net Weight: 30 pounds (6/5 lb. bags)

III. Inspection and Checkloading**A. Requirements**

Representatives of the AMS, Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Processed Products Branch (USDA Grader) must perform the inspection and checkloading required by Articles 54 and 55 of USDA-1.

Inspection of frozen products must be performed not more than 90 days prior to shipment. Whether each lot offered meets the product and container requirements of the contract must be determined on the basis of representative sample units. Representative sample units will be graded according to the Regulations Governing Inspection and Certification of Frozen Vegetables and Related Products (7 C.F.R. part 52), and United States Standards for Condition of Food Containers (7 C.F.R. part 42.140), effective on the date of the Invitation.

B. Certification

Subject to Articles 54 and 55 of USDA-1, the acceptability of the quality, weight, packaging, and checkloading of the product must be evidenced by certificates issued by the USDA Grader.

No product shall be shipped unless the USDA Grader informs the Contractor that a designated lot is acceptable. Notice by the USDA Grader that a designated lot scheduled for shipment does not meet requirements of the contract shall constitute rejection of such lot.

C. Procedures

The Contractor must give the USDA Grader at least 7 days advance notice when scheduling inspection service. Prior to sampling, the Contractor must furnish the USDA Grader with a list of codes and the approximate number of cases per code.

IV. Failure to Meet Specifications

Any lot which fails applicable specifications prescribed herein will be rejected as not acceptable for delivery, except as noted in A or B below. If any lot of Frozen Vegetables fails to meet the product or packaging requirement noted below, the Contractor may request in writing that USDA accept delivery of the lot. USDA may, at its option, accept delivery, provided that the purchase price is the contract price less the minimum discount specified, depending upon the reason(s) for the failure to meet specifications.

A. Product**1. Net Weight Deficiency****(a) Average Weight Deficiency:**

If any lot fails low average net weight, the discount will be twice the percentage by which the lot fails to meet the minimum required weight.

Example: Weight required for a given bag is 100.0 ounces. The average weight for a given lot of product is 98 ounces. Such lot is then 2.0 ounces, or 2 percent (.02) below the required weight. The purchase price for such lot would be the contract price less a discount of 4 percent (.04) of such price.

(b) Individual Weight Deficiency:

If any lot fails requirements for low individual container or low subgroup averages (net weight) the discount must be one percent (.01) of the contract price.

(c) Combination of Average and Individual Weight Deficiency

If any lot fails because of a combination of both (a) and (b) above, the discount must be whichever of the individual discounts is greater.

B. Packaging

1. Secondary Container (Case) Markings
 - (a) Missing Contract Number: Subject to a two (2) percent discount.
 - (b) Missing 'Not to be Sold or Exchanged' Statement: Subject to a two (2) percent discount.
 - (c) Missing 'Distributed by USDA in Cooperation with State and Local or Tribal Governments for Domestic Food Assistance Programs' Statement: Subject to a two (2) percent discount.
 - (d) Missing Pack Date: Subject to a one (1) percent discount.
 - (e) Incorrect or missing UPC Code: Subject to a one (1) percent discount.
 - (f) Missing 'USDA Shield': Subject to a one (1) percent discount.
 - (g) Missing 'Recycle Symbol': Subject to a one (1) percent discount.

Susan E. Proden
Contracting Officer
Fruit and Vegetable Programs
Agricultural Marketing Service

V. Exhibits

Exhibit 1
Required Markings for Shipping Containers
ALL PRINTING TO BE IN BLACK INK

<u>BOTH SIDE PANELS</u>	<u>BOTH END PANELS</u>
PRODUCT NAME	PRODUCT NAME
1/	CONTRACT NO. 3/
2/	PACKED IN 4/ BY
	5/
USDA SYMBOL	6/
DISTRIBUTED BY USDA IN COOPERATION WITH STATE AND LOCAL OR TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS FOR DOMESTIC FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS	
NOT TO BE SOLD OR EXCHANGED STORE IN FREEZER KEEP FROZEN AT 0° or LOWER	

Product name must be printed or stenciled on a separate line in letters at least three-fourths inch high, and all other information must be in letters less than three-fourths inch but at least three-eighths inch high. The USDA Food Symbol must be printed, stamped, or labeled and be of sufficient size to stand out prominently. Case markings must be limited to case codes and those contained in this Exhibit.

- 1/ Insert any additional product style, pack, packing media, or further definition as applicable; (i.e. Yellow, Cut, Chopped, etc.).
- 2/ Insert the size and number of packages per case, i.e. 6 /No. 10 cans, 6/5 pound bags, 12/46 ounce cans, 1/25 pound bag.
- 3/ Insert the last five digits of contract number.
- 4/ Insert month and year packed (The first month of packing season is acceptable).
- 5/ Insert name of Packer and Packer's Address - City, State, and Zip Code. This information can be placed on the end panels or the side panels.
- 6/ Insert Universal Product Code (see Exhibit "C").
- 7/ Vendors who have proper certification are encouraged to place the universally recognized Kosher symbol here.

Exhibit 2
Alternative Label for Shipping Containers
(Includes all Required Information)



Product Name

Style

Size/Number per case

Contract Number xxxxxxxxxx

Packed in: Month Year

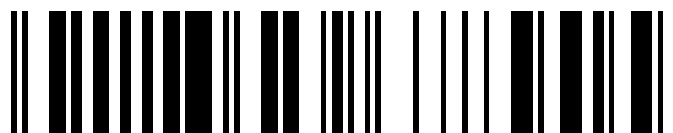
Packed by: ABC Growers

Any Town, CA 99999

**DISTRIBUTED BY USDA IN COOPERATION
WITH STATE AND LOCAL OR TRIBAL
GOVERNMENTS FOR DOMESTIC FOOD
ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

NOT TO BE SOLD OR EXCHANGED

STORE IN FREEZER AT 0° F, or BELOW



1234567891012345678910

Exhibit 3
Sample Alternative Label for Shipping Containers



Frozen Sweet Potatoes

Random Cut

6/5 pound bags

Contract Number 120292000

Packed in: November 1999

Packed by: ABC Growers

Any Town, CA 99999

**DISTRIBUTED BY USDA IN COOPERATION
WITH STATE AND LOCAL OR TRIBAL
GOVERNMENTS FOR DOMESTIC FOOD
ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

**NOT TO BE SOLD OR EXCHANGED
STORE IN FREEZER AT 0° F, or BELOW**



11 07 15001 0225 8

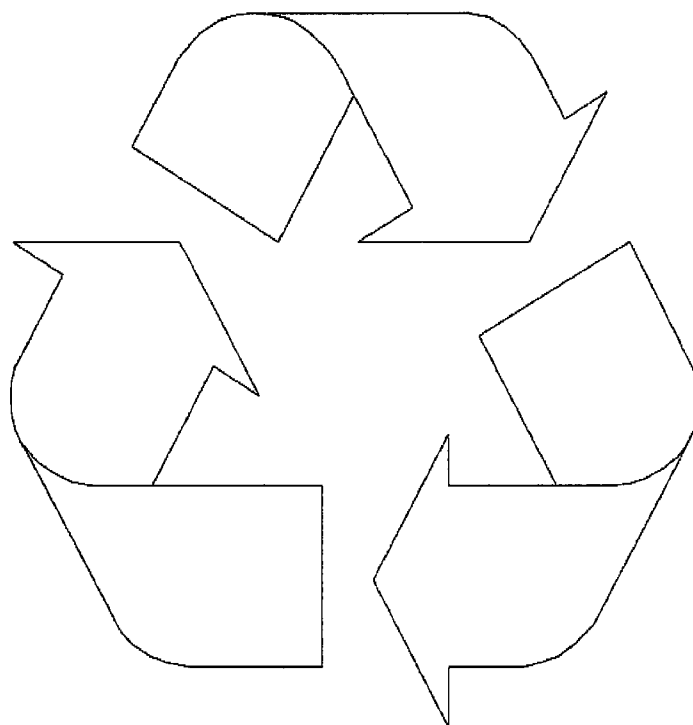
Exhibit 4

Universal Product Codes

<u>Frozen Vegetables</u>	<u>Primary Container</u>	<u>Secondary Container</u>
Asparagus (6/5 lb.)		1 07 15001 01131 9
Carrots (30 lb.)		1 07 15001 01099 2
Corn (30 lb.)		1 07 15001 01130 2
Corn-on-the-Cob (96 ears per case)		1 07 15001 01129 6
Green Beans (30 lb.)		1 07 15001 01070 1
Mixed Vegetables (30 lb.)		1 07 15001 01055 8
Peas (30 lb.)		1 07 15001 01160 9
Mashed Sweetpotatoes (6/5 lb. bags)	7 1500101225 8	1 07 15001 01225 5
Random Cut Sweetpotatoes (6/5 lb. bags)	7 1500101224 1	1 07 15001 01224 8

Exhibit 5

“Please Recycle” Symbol and Statement



**PLEASE
RECYCLE**

Exhibit 6

“Corrugated Recycles” Symbol and Statement



**Corrugated
Recycles**

Exhibit 7

USDA Symbol



VI. Attachment

Attachment 1
Frozen Supersweet Whole Kernel Corn Guidelines

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Agricultural Marketing Service
Fruit and Vegetable Programs
Processed Products Branch

A-493
October 1997

SUBJECT: Interpretative Guide for Frozen Supersweet Whole Kernel Corn to Determine: Tenderness and Maturity; and Flavor.

TO: All Inspectors

FILE UNDER: Grading Manual for Frozen Whole Kernel Corn

This memorandum is an interpretation of the grading instructions for frozen supersweet whole kernel corn. It will provide answers to the questions that have been raised about the evaluation of tenderness and maturity and flavor of supersweet corn.

The quality characteristics of varieties of whole kernel corn used by the freezing and canning industry differ significantly as a result of today's science and technology. Varietal types of supersweet (shrunken 2) provide a higher naturally occurring sweet flavor, and/or crisp texture. These varieties, when processed by freezing, may be slightly darker in color, and may have a slightly tough pericarp (kernel skin) than conventional sweet corn. These varieties do not go through the same development stages as conventional corn [milk, early cream, cream, and dough stages (determined by squeezing)].

Flavor is a separate quality factor in grading supersweet corn. The initial sweetness does not always relate to the maturity of supersweet corn. It is affected by the variety and processing method used. Year-to year differences in growing conditions can also affect sweetness and flavor. However, the initial sweetness level increases as the corn matures, then the sweetness declines as the corn becomes Grade B.

The applicant must declare the lot to be sampled as "supersweet" frozen whole kernel corn prior to sampling or grading.

To evaluate tenderness and maturity of frozen supersweet whole kernel corn, apply the chew test only. Do not use the "squeeze" test as described in A-Memo 412. Apply the following criteria based on chewing:

Good tenderness and maturity in supersweet (shrunken 2), and genetically modified corn is crisp, corn that may have slightly tough pericarp, compact internal flesh, that is associated with plump or full kernels. There are three levels of quality within "good tenderness and maturity:" very tender, and crisp; tender, and crisp; and moderately tender, and crisp.

Supersweet - Tenderness and Maturity - Grade A

Top (48 or 50 points)	Very tender, and crisp
Middle (47 points)	Tender, and crisp
Bottom (45 or 46 points)	Moderately tender, and crisp

Reasonably good tenderness and maturity in supersweet and genetically modified corn lacks tenderness and may be moderately dry. Kernels may have a reasonably tough pericarp and occasionally are dented. There are two levels of quality within "reasonably good tenderness and maturity:" not crisp, not moist; and not crisp, moderately dry, and may include occasional dented kernels.

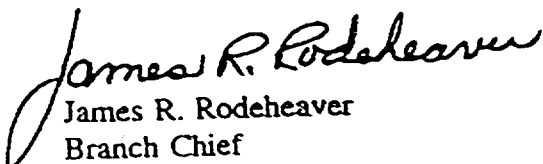
Supersweet Corn - Tenderness and Maturity - Grade B

Top (43 and 44 points)	not crisp, not moist
Bottom (40 - 42 points)	not crisp, moderately dry, and may include occasional dented kernels

Fair to almost tough in supersweet and genetically modified corn is dry, chewy corn, with fairly tough pericarp.

Supersweet Corn - Tenderness and Maturity - Grade C

Range (36 - 39 points)	Dry, chewy, pulpy, dented kernels
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James R. Rodeheaver
Branch Chief

Distribution: A
Agriculture: Washington